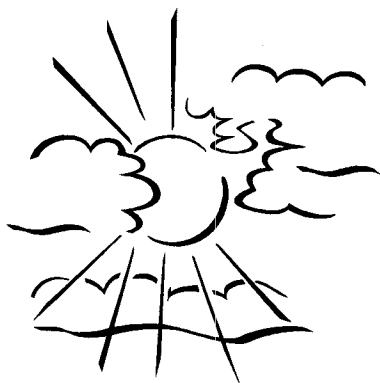


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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Wednesday, April 19, 2006

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

| TOPIC | PAGE |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| *Child Abuse/ Neglect/Protection | 2-8 |
| Health Care | 9-11 |
| Domestic Violence | 12-14 |
| Juvenile Justice | 15-16 |
| Foster Care | 17 |
| Elder Abuse | 18 |
| Food Assistance | 19 |
| Charities | 20-23 |
| State Budget | 24-25 |
| Children's Trust Fund | 26 |

Ingham County administrator to represent slain 7-year-old boy

4/19/2006, 5:29 a.m. ET

The Associated Press

MASON, Mich. (AP) — A public administrator for Ingham County has said he will apply to represent a 7-year-old boy who was found dead months ago.

Tom Walsh, who handles legal matters for the deceased when nobody else steps forward, has planned to file papers Wednesday in Ingham County Probate Court to become the personal representative of Ricky Holland.

Walsh would have the authority to manage Holland's affairs, including the donations of hundreds of community members.

He has not ruled out suing the Williamston boy's adoptive parents, Tim and Lisa Holland. The couple has been charged with Ricky's murder.

Ricky Holland was reported missing July 2, 2005. In late January of this year, Tim Holland led authorities to Ricky's body in a wooded area near Dansville in rural Ingham County. At the time of his disappearance, Ricky's parents told police they believed he had run away.

Both Tim and Lisa Holland have denied killing Ricky, but they've also pointed fingers at each other in his death.

The Holland's will face trial in Ingham Circuit Court on murder, child abuse and other charges in Ricky's death.

Walsh told The Detroit News he will look into filing a civil law suit against the Holland's for damages related to Ricky's death, though the couple may have few assets left by the time their legal bills are paid.

Grand Haven boy dies 6 years after shaking injury

4/18/2006, 3:35 p.m. ET

The Associated Press

GRAND HAVEN, Mich. (AP) — A 6-year-old boy who sustained disabling brain injuries while at a day-care provider's house in 2000 has died. The provider was acquitted of child-abuse charges.

Nicholas Lachmann, son of Paul and Kathleen Lachmann of Grand Haven, died at his home Friday.

In 2001, a Muskegon County jury found Paula Jean Durek not guilty of first-degree child-abuse. Durek, who then operated a day care center in Norton Shores, was charged after the baby became limp and unresponsive while in her care Oct. 18, 2000.

Authorities said the injuries sustained by Nicholas, then 6 months old, appeared consistent with shaken-baby syndrome.

Durek lost her state license to operate a day-care center in her home, The Muskegon Chronicle said.

Lachmann's mother, Kathy, said that even though he couldn't talk, Nicholas smiled every time he heard his name.

"His smile brightened up a room. He had a great laugh," Kathy Lachmann told the Grand Haven Tribune.

Doctors initially gave Nicholas only a few months to live, but he surpassed their expectations and even was able to go on a family vacation to Disneyland, Lachmann said.

But six months ago, doctors discovered that Nicholas' brain stem was beginning to fail and his body temperature was declining. Eventually his breathing and eating were affected, and he was taken off his feeding tube, his mother said.

"There's going to be a huge hole in our lives," she said. "Now that he's not going to be here, we need to find a new normal. It's going to be very, very hard."

Woman Who Delivered Baby In Basement Identified

Police Say Woman Abandoned Baby

POSTED: 5:43 pm EDT April 18, 2006

Police have identified the woman who delivered a baby in the basement of a relative's home and then abandoned her.

Detroit police are questioning the 23-year-old woman who gave birth in the basement of her aunt's home on Monday and then left, without the newborn, and the family knowing she had delivered.

The baby is being treated at Sinai Grace Hospital and is expected to be OK.

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Sex offender arraigned on new charges

STACY LANGLEY, The Huron Daily Tribune

04/19/2006

BAD AXE — After serving the full 15 year prison sentence on a 1990 conviction of third degree criminal sexual conduct, Charles J. Apley, 40, of Bad Axe was released from prison in 2005. He was back in court Monday facing new charges involving a 10-year-old Bad Axe boy.

Apley appeared with his attorney, Christopher Titus of Marlette, for his arraignment in Huron County District Court on a felony charge of second degree criminal sexual conduct and extortion.

According to Huron County Prosecutor Mark J. Gaertner, Apley was arrested by Bad Axe Police on Friday after an investigation was underway concerning an allegation the 10-year-old victim made to his friends that Apley had sexual contact with him.

Gaertner said one of the alleged victim's friends came forward to a trooper at the Michigan State Police Post in Bad Axe late last week regarding the claim the victim had made.

Gaertner said the alleged incident is believed to have occurred right next door to the police post inside Apley's apartment (located across the street from the Bad Axe Junior High School). Since the incident occurred in the city, the investigation was turned over by the trooper to the Bad Axe Police Department. Det. Kevin Knoblock from the Bad Axe Police Department was assigned to the case and has been handling the investigation, questioning the victim, the boy's friends, the boy's mother — who was having a relationship with Apley at the time of the alleged incident — and Apley. Bad Axe Police also seized several items inside Apley's apartment, including Apley's home computer.

When it came time to determine Apley's bond, Gaertner asked District Court Judge Karl E. Kraus on Monday to set bond at \$50,000 cash with conditions that Apley have no contact with the victim or the victim's mother.

Apley's attorney expressed the possibility that Apley's parents may put their Bad Axe home up as collateral for the bond which Kraus set at \$50,000/10 percent. Apley's bond conditions also included that he is not allowed to have contact with anyone under the age of 21.

But late Monday, Gaertner said it was discovered Apley's parents home — where Apley planned to go if he was released on bond — is located near a daycare

center, prompting Gaertner to request Kraus keep Apley behind bars until a new bond hearing can take place sometime today.

"We are going to protest very loudly that he not be anywhere near a daycare center," said Gaertner about Apley, who remains behind bars as of press time today.

Apley's apartment is currently within 1,000 feet from the Bad Axe Public Schools which is a violation of a new law that went into effect on Jan. 1. Gaertner said since Apley lived there prior to the law going into effect, the law does not apply to Apley.

For more information about convicted sex offenders living in your neighborhood go to <http://www.mipsor.state.mi.us/>

The website provides updated information along with photos of the registered sex offenders.

Huron Daily Tribune 2006

Program planned to assist abused kids

Wednesday, April 19, 2006

By Larry O'Connor
loconnor@citpat.com -- 768-4926

A successful Circuit Court drug diversion program may soon be used as the template to keep kids from becoming permanent state wards.

The Jackson Recovery Court, also known as drug court, is in its second year with 29 graduates so far. In lieu of jail, participants receive intensive treatment and supervision for drug and alcohol related problems.

On Tuesday, Circuit Judge Charles Nelson said a similar program is being crafted for abuse and neglect cases where children have been removed because parents used alcohol or drugs.

Like Recovery Court, the program would include weekly testing, counseling and court appearances.

"The carrot for the parents is if they make progress, there would be increased contact with kids, supervised or unsupervised," Nelson said.

The primary goal is to prevent termination of parental rights, which is costly to the county and state in addition to exacting an emotional toll on children and families.

"If we can't get the parents straight and sober, there is little hope for the children," said attorney Ron Fabian, who is on a committee putting the program together.

The Weatherwax Foundation and United Way may be sources for some startup funding, Nelson said. The new program could be in place by late summer or early fall.

Such a program has been a goal of Probate Judge Susan Vandercook. Some parents are motivated to get help, but get side-tracked.

"I'm hopeful with this type of intensive support and scrutiny this will help (parents) be more successful," said Vandercook.

Court officials believe the family version can mirror the drug treatment court's success. The 72 percent graduation rate exceeded the initial 60-percent projections.

Recovery Court was designed for those charged with drug and alcohol offenses. To be eligible, addicts cannot have pending felony cases or any previous conviction for violent or sex-related offenses.

If they stay clean for a year, the judge reduces their felonies to misdemeanors. The voluntary program saves money otherwise spent to incarcerate offenders.

In another measure of success, 70 people are taking part, which also exceeded expectations, Nelson said.

"We're going to have to start weeding out those who are not dedicated to the program," he said.

State prepares for Medicare rush Thousands of seniors have yet to sign up for prescription drug plan as May 15 deadline looms.

Sharon Terlep / The Detroit News

April 19, 2006

With the deadline for enrolling in Medicare's new prescription drug plan less than a month away, the state says thousands of Michigan seniors who want the benefit have yet to sign up.

State agencies are preparing for a hectic last-minute rush as seniors try to sort through the options in the first-ever Medicare drug coverage and enroll by the deadline.

Seniors who don't sign up by May 15 won't have another chance to until November.

They won't be eligible for prescription drug coverage until Jan. 1 and will pay higher rates for enrolling late.

"We anticipate that May is going to be horrible," said Carrie Nicholson, who oversees Medicare and Medicaid issues for the Area Agency on Aging that serves much of Metro Detroit. "We're trying to do as much as we can before then."

About 860,000 of Michigan's 1.5 million Medicare beneficiaries had signed up through January. Many who haven't don't want or need coverage through Medicare, the federal system for elderly and disabled people.

But, at least 4,000 or 5,000 people likely want the benefit and haven't signed up, said Mary Johnson, director of the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program.

"A lot of people just don't know yet that they can get help," she said.

Agencies that serve the state's Medicare-eligible residents are working frantically to convey a clear message: Whatever you do, do not wait until that last minute.

Many seniors haven't enrolled, officials say, either because they are intimidated by the process, unaware the benefit exists or are procrastinating.

Medicare is working with 18 private insurers in Michigan to administer dozens of options under the program.

Calls to the state's help center for Medicare and Medicaid recipients remain 50 percent above average.

At the same time, seniors are still packing in to near-daily workshops offering one-on-one help. And more than 900 Michigan seniors -- responding to a recent AARP mailing -- sent in written requests asking for help in understanding the plan.

St. Clair Shores' Billy Cupples was among those who were initially bewildered by the drug plan. But Cupples said he's now saving thousands of dollars.

The retired bread deliveryman found the Medicare plan daunting, particularly the 90-page booklet he received to help explain the options.

But Cupples, 69, slogged through the material and asked for help from anyone who seemed informed.

The work paid off.

Column: Health care solution means business

Wednesday, April 19, 2006

By Sharon Emery
Booth Newspapers

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's plan to cover 550,000 of Michigan's 1.1 million residents who do not have health insurance avoids a major sticking point that gummed up the works in Massachusetts' reform efforts: requiring a buy-in from business.

Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney recently signed legislation widely heralded as being the nation's first comprehensive plan to insure all state residents. It requires everyone to have some form of health insurance and offers a state-subsidized plan for the half-million uninsured people who can't afford it on their own.

The plan took more than a year to hammer out, and a key haggling point was whether business should help pay for the uninsured, and if so, in what amount. The Democratic legislature's plan requires businesses that don't provide health insurance to pay up to \$295 per worker annually so that the state can cover them.

"I see a significant commitment of businesses to contribute in some way to the insurance costs of the uninsured. I see this as a significant principle, whatever the dollar figure is," Massachusetts Democratic Speaker of the House Salvatore DiMasi told the New York Times.

But Romney, a Republican and son of former Michigan Gov. George Romney, vetoed that part of the legislation, saying the \$48 million brought in by the business fee wasn't needed. Democrats are likely to override.

Those concerned about health care here are watching to see if the Massachusetts experiment works -- particularly in providing affordable insurance plans -- or blows up.

"It seems to me it has several of the right ingredients," including an element of personal responsibility, said Rob Fowler, president and CEO of the Small Business Association of Michigan and a member of a state panel studying the uninsured. "Even if doesn't work, we can still learn something."

Hopefully, it will be a quick learning curve.

"I believe we're very close to a financial collapse of the system," said Nancy McKeague, of the Michigan Health & Hospital Association. "This simply isn't sustainable."

The doctors and hospitals she represents provide upward of \$1 billion annually in uncompensated care.

Granholm's \$1 billion Michigan First Health Care Plan avoids the politically sensitive issue of getting business to foot part of the bill by instead leveraging more money from the federal government.

Pending federal approval, Michigan will take \$400 million of what it spends on the uninsured and put it into a plan to subsidize private health insurance for people who can't afford it. That money would be used to obtain up to \$600 million in federal matching funds.

But that plan covers just half the problem, and business involvement is inevitable. The other half-million Michigan residents without health insurance will have to see what the Michigan State Planning Project for the Uninsured comes up with. Its plan for providing affordable health insurance for all is due soon.

Fowler, who serves on the panel, said broad coverage is crucial.

"If you focus only on the uninsured, (the problem) squeezes out somewhere else," Fowler told me. "... You have to deal with the whole thing. It's an interconnected problem -- Medicaid reimbursement, affordability for small business, the unemployed and uninsured."

Some Massachusetts lawmakers wanted to charge companies 5 percent of their payroll if they didn't provide health insurance, but ultimately feared it might hurt the state's economy.

That fear resonates here, where lawmakers in the GOP-controlled legislature have pigeon-holed a similar move in committee. Senate Democrats' attempts to tie their Fair Share Health Care Fund bill to Republican bills have flopped.

Wendy Hofmeyer of the Michigan Chamber of Commerce calls the bill "a massive, new payroll tax" designed to force companies to "play or pay."

Fowler agrees and said Michigan's plan must be broader.

"Business has a stake in and a responsibility to engage in this conversation," Fowler said, "but you can't just require business to pay the whole thing. ... We have to be a partner in a total solution."

Midland woman held hostage at knifepoint by her boyfriend for two hours

Kelly Nankervis, Midland Daily News

04/18/2006

A tense hostage situation ended peacefully Monday on Bay City Road.

About 5:45 p.m., 911 dispatchers received a phone call from a Midland man, 34, who said he was holding his girlfriend at knifepoint and demanded to speak with a police negotiator. Deputy Chief Bob Lane said he did not know what caused the man to hold the woman hostage.

Midland Police and the SWAT -- Special Weapons and Tactics -- team responded to the scene, the Shattuck Apartments near Waldo Road.

Lane said police did not evacuate residents from the apartments, but residents were told to stay away from doors and windows for their safety.

While police carefully watched the apartment, crowds of onlookers on a sidewalk across Bay City Road slowly drifted nearer and nearer to scene, and were waved away several times by police officers. Some laughed and giggled while talking on cell phones, hiding behind bushes, while others commented that things like this "just don't happen in Midland."

Officers blocked all traffic on Bay City Road, and the Midland County Emergency Services Mobile Command Unit was brought to the scene and parked near Willow Street.

Not much was visible to those who waited until two officers, followed by a handful of SWAT team members dressed in camouflage and carrying long guns, ran into the complex.

After negotiations between the suspect and police, he released his hostage, identified at the scene as Jackie Redmond by her stepfather, Joe Harper. Redmond was not harmed.

When Redmond came out of the apartment, she tried to get back inside, Harper said, adding she wanted to talk her boyfriend out of the home. Police held her back, pulling her around the corner of a building.

A few minutes later, police came out with the man in custody.

Among the onlookers was Judy Scherzer, who lives nearby. She and her husband had just returned home from getting groceries to find the scary situation.

"We got here just before they really blocked the road off," she said.

Scherzer was in the know at the scene after talking with Harper. She was told that the hostage and the suspect were dating, and that he was armed with a knife.

Harper tried to talk to his stepdaughter, but didn't get much of a chance.

"Yeah, she's pretty shaken up," he said, adding Redmond and her boyfriend had some sort of argument before he pulled out a knife.

"Well, I like to see something end peaceably," Scherzer said, standing near Harper.

Near the end of the standoff, the hollow blow of a gunshot echoed out from the complex, causing those across the road to flinch.

Harper said he was told the gunshot was a misfire, though police at the scene would not comment.

"During the course of events, a SWAT team member was repositioning a rifle when the firearm accidentally discharged, causing no harm," Lane read from a statement. That event is under review.

Midland County Prosecutor Mike Carpenter said his office had not seen reports on the incident because police still were investigating.

Wednesday, April 19, 2006

Class will raise awareness, funds for ShelterHouse

By Mark Rogers-Staff Writer

Published: Wednesday, April 19, 2006 9:08 AM CDT

COLDWATER — A women's self-defense seminar on Saturday will do more than just educate women about the dangers of the world. It will help raise funds for the local women's shelter.

Lloyd Adams is putting together a program at Adams Karate Fitness on Marshall Street, and proceeds from the event will go to help the ShelterHouse.

The class, which begins at 11 a.m. on Saturday, will not only teach self-defense techniques, it will offer an education about the number of assaults, rapes and murders in the area, as well as in the United States.

Grant to help county track youth crime

Fixing racial disparity is goal of state program

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Wednesday, April 19, 2006

By Ron Fonger
rfonger@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6317

GENESEE COUNTY - A new coordinator will track what happens to local juveniles who end up in the court system and change how they are processed.

The county accepted a \$125,000 state grant to fund the effort, which would examine why black children are more likely to land in juvenile court than whites.

Part of the new coordinator's job will be to examine cases with an eye toward diverting black juveniles out of the system earlier - before they ever see a judge - and into services they might need to stay out of trouble.

"Any kid who ends up in front of a judge is at risk of being removed from home. ... I want to try to (help those) high-needs kids," said Remus Holbrook, director of social services for Genesee Circuit Court's Family Division.

Holbrook said a 2005 Michigan State University study triggered the county's interest in changing its routines and practices, even though he said many children in the local system weren't counted by the MSU study.

Cedrick Heraux, data manager of the study, said Holbrook is right about a lack of data but said the problem of disproportionate arrests is widespread enough to merit further study in Genesee, Kent and Macomb counties.

The three counties were picked for further study because they represent areas with large overall populations, some geographic diversity and people in the juvenile court system who are willing to work on the problem, he said.

QUICK TAKE

Black and white

- A new \$125,000 grant is designed to help Genesee County reduce the disparity between what happens to white and black children when they get into legal trouble.

- From 1998 to 2003 in Michigan, black children ages 10-16 were 88 percent more likely than whites to be arrested, according to a Michigan State University study.

"Genesee is in fairly good shape compared to the rest of the state," Heraux said. "We didn't (even) have information for every county, ... (and) there are quite a few counties that had scores that were significantly higher."

Statewide, black children ages 10-16 are the most over-represented minority group in the juvenile justice system at a rate of 2 to 1 compared to others, according to the MSU study.

Frances L. Gilcreast, president of the Flint branch of the NAACP, said the statistics follow the pattern of blacks being treated differently by the justice system.

"When it comes to sentencing, when it comes to whatever, ... we are always on the short end of the stick," Gilcreast said.

Black children who are arrested or diverted less frequently from juvenile court are hurt for the rest of their lives, she said.

"Those kind of things always come back to haunt you. If you get in the system, it's impossible to get out," Gilcreast said.

Lansing State Journal

April 19, 2006

INGHAM COUNTY

Two appointed to positions on foster care review board

Kimberly Thompson of Holt and Cinda Eltzroth of Lansing have been appointed to the Ingham County Foster Care Review Board.

Thompson and Eltzroth completed a two-day training by the Foster Care Review Program in Lansing.

The board meets monthly to review a sample of cases of children placed in temporary foster care and make recommendations to the courts regarding permanent placement.

- Chris Andrews

MEDIA ADVISORY

April 19, 2006

CONTACT: Karen Carroll

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Task Force On Elder Abuse Holds Meeting

WHAT: The Michigan Office of Services to the Aging (OSA) is convening a meeting of the Governor's Task Force on Elder Abuse.

At this meeting, Task Force committees will present to the full Task Force their draft recommendations with the goal of gaining consensus on the recommendations to include in the final report that is due to the Governor by May 31, 2006. No public testimony will be taken at this meeting.

WHEN: Thursday, April 20, 2006
It will begin at 10 a.m. and end at 5 p.m.

WHERE: Hannah Community Center
819 Abbott Road
East Lansing, MI 48823

It is open to the public.

WHO: Sharon L. Gire, Director of the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, will be in attendance, along with appointed members of the Task Force.

Eagle Scout helped upgrade food bank

Marseille Arbuckle Jr. of Livonia attained the highest rank of the Boy Scouts of America, Eagle Scout.

Arbuckle, a senior at Churchill High School, is a member of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church Boy Scout Troop No. 647 and has been active in scouting since age 5.

"Being a Boy Scout has given me an opportunity to learn things that will help me for my entire life," Arbuckle said. "I've learned how to do for myself and others."

His Eagle Scout project involved organizing a group of scouts to refurbish the rest rooms at the Community Food Bank, which depends on wide-ranging community support to serve hungry people.

Gleaners has thousands of volunteers who load, unload, pack and repackage tons of collected food, and pleasant rest rooms help enhance the volunteer experience.

Along with his Eagle Scout project, Arbuckle delivers meals to the elderly on holidays with the Meals on Wheels program and is active with the youth group at Hartford Memorial Baptist Church. He has also attended the Youth Leadership Development program at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, and represented Michigan at the National Youth Leadership Conference for Science and Medicine.

He has been accepted to the University of Michigan for the fall, where he will study pre-med.

Originally published April 16, 2006

United Way unveils Impact Report

The Battle Creek Enquirer

The United Way of Greater Battle Creek has moved in recent years to a strongly outcome-based approach to funding for local programs.

Now the organization has issued a report that shows just what kind of outcomes the community is getting for its contributions.

The new Impact Report describes, by program, how many people were reached and how they were helped by the program.

At Legal Services of South Central Michigan, for example, United Way funding helped 28 victims of domestic violence with legal cases, while 29 people attended do-it-yourself divorce clinics and 686 people got advice or a referral to other legal services. Hundreds of other people received other services from the agency, as well.

"We have been collecting the results, or outcomes, from our funded programs for several years, but this is the first time we have compiled all those results in one document," United Way's Mike Larson said in a news release. Larson is president and chief professional officer of the organization.

To get a copy of the report, call the United Way office at 962-9538 or download one online from www.unitedwaybattlecreek.org/whatmatters/

Originally published April 19, 2006

United Way announces grants to 23 local programs

By Mardi Suhs, Cadillac News

April 19, 2006

CADILLAC - Twenty-three local programs have met the United Way's standards of addressing the most critical needs in our community and have been given grants totaling \$232,000.

After a successful pledge drive last fall, United Way announced that it was able to increase community investments by 23 percent.

"This year we were able to increase the United Way's investments in youth programs by 10.5 percent and over 13 percent in access to health care programs," explained Diane Dykstra, executive director.

Groups that apply for financing must prove they help the community meet one of the following accessed critical needs: nurturing children and youth; strengthening families; helping individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency; affordable housing; access to health care; and maintaining healthy lifestyles.

This year, 10 grants were given to groups who help individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency. Two area senior centers fell into this category.

Eleanor Sosenko, director of the Manton Senior Center, said that without the \$10,000 United Way grant they would "be struggling and probably have to reduce staff." The center has 177 members and serves as many as 60 meals a day to area senior citizens.

The Council on Aging in Cadillac received two grants - \$17,000 to fund the DayBreak Adult Day Care Center and \$6,000 for the Cadillac Senior Center.

"These funds are very important for us," stated Bonnie Forbes, COA director. "This grant helps keep the Cadillac Senior Center open and it helps keep the doors open for the adult day care center. It gives scholarships for those who can't afford to go."

Youth program funding increased this year by 10.5 percent. Six of the 23 funded programs are dedicated to nurturing area youth.

Janice Heuer, director of the Cadillac Strings Association, said the grant for youth scholarships has a great impact.

"Some of these kids would not be able to attend class in music if it were not for the United Way grants."

The YMCA received its first grant from United Way. Director Chris Gentry said it was a nice endorsement for the YMCA teen center and teen programs.

“We are all about providing positive choices for kids,” he said.

The YMCA offers an after-school teen center three days a week from 3 to 7 p.m. with organized and informal activities. YMCA also sponsored Y-Teen Presents, a series of local concerts suggested by the Youth Advisory Committee as a way to extend Rock the Dock throughout the school year.

Funding for access to health care increased this year more than 13 percent with funds dispersed to the Community Health Clinic's Medication Access and Access to Health Care programs, offering free medications and a free health-care clinic for those without health insurance.

For a complete review of this year's allocations, go to www.unitedwaywexford.org

Your local connection

Twenty-three local programs received funding from the \$232,000 raised by the United Way campaign earmarked for community investments. Each of the programs was required to meet standards of accountability and financial stability. In addition, the groups were required to meet desired outcomes for the local community in one of these areas: 1) The nurturing of children and youth; 2) strengthening of families; 3) achieving self-sufficiency for individuals and families; 4) affordable safe housing; 5) access to health care; and 6) healthy lifestyles.

1. Community Health Clinic - Medication Access
2. Community Health Clinic - Urgent Care Program
3. OASIS Shelter - Shelter operations
4. Boy Scouts of America
5. Cadillac Strings Association - Youth Scholarship
6. Foster Grandparents - Catholic Human Services (CHS)
7. Girls Scouts of Crooked Tree
8. Staircase Youth Services
9. YMCA Teen Center

10. Disaster Services - Red Cross SSD
11. Medical Transportation - Red Cross West Central Mi.
12. Cadillac Senior Center
13. Senior Companions - CHS
14. DayBreak Adult Daycare
15. Manton Latchkey
16. Manton Senior Center
17. Salvation Army Emergency Assistance
18. Shepherd's Table Homebound Meals
19. Shepherd's Table Meal Ministry
20. Armed Forces Emergency Services - Red Cross SSD
21. Alcohol and Drug Services - CHS
22. Family Services - CHS
23. OASIS Parent Education

news@cadillacnews.com | 775-NEWS (6397)

Here's how to trim state budget by \$1.8 billion

Mackinac Center suggests cuts for replacing business tax

Gov. Jennifer Granholm says she'll gladly kill the Single Business Tax, if the Legislature comes up with a plan that won't affect government spending. That's the backwards approach to tax reform.

The revenue neutral policy guarantees that what Michigan will end up with is a shifting around of taxes, with no relief from the overall tax burden.

The better strategy is to cut government spending, and use the money saved to fund a real tax cut.

Despite the governor's protestations, that can be done without overburdening Michigan residents. But it will require lawmakers and the governor to get serious about restructuring government to make the maximum use of tax dollars.

We like many elements of the cost-cutting proposal offered by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Midland. Analyst Jack McHugh suggests more than \$1.8 billion in savings, more than enough to cover the revenue generated by the SBT.

Mackinac would base higher education funding on per-pupil grants, rather than giving each university a fixed amount. McHugh believes this would prod the universities to finally get serious about cost-cutting. A 5 percent cut in university costs would yield \$70 million.

The center also suggests shifting State Police road patrols to less expensive county sheriff's departments, saving \$65 million.

Bringing competition to the health insurance plans offered to public school teachers would net \$422 million, and another \$300 million could be gained by reforming

Medicaid and welfare.

Perhaps all of these cuts are not palatable or practical. But surely some of them are.

If even half of the savings recommended by the Mackinac Center were adopted, Michigan would be well on its way to fixing the structural problems that lead to chronic budget deficits.

If even a third of the ideas were accepted, it would be enough to cover the \$600 million spending reduction that the Single Business Tax ballot initiative sponsored by Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson would demand.

Simply creating a new tax to replace the Single Business Tax, or mixing the SBT around a bit and calling it something else, will do little to stimulate the state's economy.

Michigan needs a big play to signal to the rest of the world that its business climate has changed for the better.

Shrinking the size of government by up to \$1.8 billion would send that message.

Recommended budget cuts

- Eliminate Michigan State University's cooperative extension service (\$61 million).
- Repeal the 21st Century Jobs Fund (\$30 million).
- Contract out prisons to private firms (\$192 million).
- Eliminate outdated intermediate school districts (\$32 million).
- Cut mass transit spending \$112 million.

Source: Mackinac Center for Public Policy

Cupples, who lost his work-related health care coverage four years ago, spent about \$16,500 last year on prescriptions for himself and his wife.

With the benefit, the couple now spends less than \$6,200 a year on more than three dozen prescriptions.

"You have to read and study and ask questions," he said. "Once you do, it's a heck of a package." Federal officials say they're prepared for a May crunch, but hope to avoid one.

Some low-income seniors or others with special circumstances will be granted exceptions, but May 15 is the deadline for the vast majority.

Much work has been done to prepare workers and volunteers and to ensure that the online sign-up systems will be able to handle heavy volumes.

"We have a very strong, substantive infrastructure available," said Bob Herskovitz, a spokesman for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. "Certainly, we're ready."

You can reach Sharon Terlep at (313)223-4686 or sterlep@detnews.com.

Medicare help

For help with the Medicare drug benefit:

- (800) 803-7174
- www.mymmap.org



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Children's Trust Fund Board to Meet

April 19, 2006

The Michigan Children's Trust Fund (CTF) board will meet Thursday, April 20 at 2:00 p.m. at DTE Energy, 101 South Washington Square, Suite 700, in Lansing.

Board chair Nancy Moody will preside over the board's April meeting. The agenda includes a report from CTF executive director Richard Bearup as well as staff reports and regional coordinator reports.

The Children's Trust Fund is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The CTF works in partnership with its 72 local councils to serve 81 of Michigan's 83 counties. Local councils are independent, community-based organizations that identify needs and facilitate collaborative prevention programs for children and families in their communities. The CTF board is housed within the Department of Human Services (DHS). Since 1982, the fund has raised over \$60 million and has provided support to over six million children and families.

For more information consult the DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs